

3.13 Growth-Inducing Effects

This section presents an analysis of the potential growth-inducing impacts of the Proposed Action.

3.13.1 Affected Environment

Legal Requirements

Section 15126(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that growth-inducing effects of a proposed action be addressed. Section 1508.8(b) of the CEQ NEPA Regulations requires environmental documents to analyze indirect growth-inducing effects that may include “induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.”

3.13.2 Approach

Significance Criteria

According to CEQA Guidelines, a project is defined to be growth-inducing if it would:

- accelerate the rate of planned growth,
- remove obstacles to population growth,
- tax existing community service facilities, or
- foster, promote, or sustain economic or population growth.

3.13.3 Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action Alternative

Evaluation of growth-inducing effects of the Proposed Action is based on a qualitative analysis of the effects that could result from construction of the Intertie and from additional water supplies made available to CVP contractors.

The Proposed Action eliminates the conveyance conditions that restrict the Tracy Pumping Plant to less than its authorized pumping capacity of 4,600 cfs. In the 1980s, actual CVP deliveries averaged approximately 1,700 taf south of the Delta. Since the mid-1990s, average actual south-of-Delta deliveries have been

reduced to about 1,200 taf. The Proposed Action would result in an average annual 31 taf of additional south-of-Delta water supplies (assessed at a simulated 2020 LOD) to CVP contractors above recent historical levels through capturing surplus Delta flows and CVP releases from storage. Based on existing priority of CVP agricultural allocations, the additional water made available by the Proposed Action is expected to go to south-of-Delta agriculture (30 taf/yr), which includes but is not limited to: Westlands Water District, San Luis Water District, Panoche Water District; M&I (2 taf/yr); and CVC (2 taf/yr).

Overall contract amounts to CVP contractors would not be altered by the proposed action. The impacts associated with full deliveries of water to CVP contractors have been addressed for a number of CVP contractors under existing environmental documentation that covers interim contract renewals. Environmental documentation is currently being prepared for long-term renewal of all contracts. Under the proposed contract renewals the contracted amounts of water to CVP contractors would remain the same. The environmental documentation for long-term renewal assumes delivery of full contract amounts.

Many agricultural operations rely on more than one source of water in order to provide a dependable water supply. Thus, minor improvements in one supply source may not materially affect long-term planning decisions based on the total amounts and overall reliability of sources available in a given region. The additional water supplies for CVP contractors are expected to lessen reliance on other existing sources such as groundwater and water transfers.

The Proposed Action is not expected to contribute to new growth-inducing effects because it would not cause or remove an obstacle to growth or foster additional economic or population growth. Water supplies made available as part of this proposed action would be used on land currently under cultivation or historically irrigated lands, and continued agricultural production of these lands would not result in growth-inducing impacts or related significant environmental impacts. The additional water supplies as a result of the proposed action would not result in any historically uncultivated lands being brought into production or conversion of native vegetation.

The potential for indirect growth-inducing effects of the proposed action by potentially freeing up existing water supplies is remote, speculative, and unquantifiable. Indirect effects are defined to include only effects that are reasonably certain to occur.

Growth at the local level is controlled by municipalities and counties through land use zoning, regulations, and policies. Growth inducement would be considered an adverse impact only if the growth is inconsistent with or not accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the affected area. Each local government evaluates each development plan within its purview, assesses its environmental impacts, and ultimately approves or disapproves any growth. It is the responsibility of local agencies to mitigate any negative impacts of growth they have approved within their jurisdiction.

Although the Proposed Action project would result in additional water going to CVP contractors, this is not considered a growth inducing-impact for the following reasons:

- Water will be used to compensate for recent reductions of historical deliveries/supplies to CVP contractors.
- Water will be delivered to the same service areas and places of use as it has been historically.
- Water will be delivered in the same manner, physically identical, to past CVP deliveries.
- There will be no change in the contract amounts of CVP contractors.
- There are other sources of water available to some water districts.
- The amount of water being made available is only an approximate 2.5% increase.